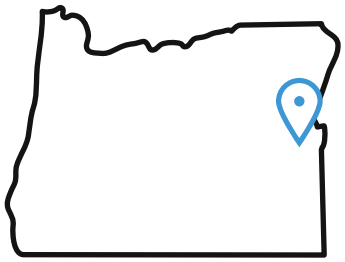
CAREER JOURNEYS

Lesson 4

Cassandra Fleckenstein

Wildland Firefighter



Vale, OR

About Cassandra

Cassandra Fleckenstein is a wildland firefighter, instructor, and Bureau of Land Management officer in Vale, Oregon. Fleckenstein's job covers a lot of ground, from responding to dispatch fire calls to training all-women firefighting recruits. It's demanding, but rewarding work.

Fleckenstein started out in a dispatch center while in high school to earn money for college. She eventually landed a job on an engine crew, but by the time she finished school, Fleckenstein had lost interest in her English degree. She decided to pursue a career in firefighting instead.

In 2017, Fleckenstein began teaching at a wildfire boot camp for women in New Mexico. Inspired, she started a first-of-its-kind program to recruit women for the Bureau of Land Management in the Pacific Northwest. "I think one of the toughest things is when you see a wildland firefighter in a movie or on TV. They're always men." Fleckenstein wants to show women that firefighting is a real option for them. The program brings up to 30 women from across the country to Vale, giving potential recruits the skills and information needed to decide if it's the right fit.

It's hard work, to be sure. Firefighters carry heavy gear, and live far from home during fire season, away from family and friends. But Fleckenstein has learned to appreciate the remoteness as an outdoor enthusiast and loves working with her team.

Objectives:

Students will:

- Learn about potential career paths in firefighting and wildland management.
- Understand the skills and requirements needed to be a wildland firefighter.
- Learn some of the challenges and benefits of working in a remote area as a firefighter and training others in learning new skills.

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Resources

1. Career Journeys Video: Cassandra Fleckenstein – Wildland Firefighter (time)

2. Career Journeys Video: Q&A with Cassandra Fleckenstein (time)

3. Career Journey Lesson Plan Guidebook

Teacher Prep

Preview the 2 videos listed in the resources section at left.

Instructor's Note:

The videos can be screened for groups of students or assigned individually for self-guided study.

Lesson Plan

WARM-UP

Share the following:

Cassandra Fleckenstein is a wildland firefighter, instructor, and Bureau of Land Management officer in Vale, Oregon. She helps combat wildfires and helps others build their firefighting skills.

To focus student engagement, provide the following grounding questions prior to viewing the Profile Video:

- What comes to mind when you think of firefighting?
- When you think of firefighters, where do you picture them living and working?
- Why might someone choose firefighting as a career path?
- What new career terminology or language did you encounter that needs explanation or definition?

Provide students with the Profile Video (linked above) for synchronous or asynchronous viewing.

After viewing the Profile Video, ask students to engage in a brief dialogue, quick write, or table talk on the grounding questions provided.

INSTRUCTION

Provide students with the following discussion questions prior to viewing the Q&A Video:

- What comes to mind when you think about wildland firefighting?
- What kinds of work tasks might they complete or tools they might use on a daily basis?
- How was Cassandra inspired to become a wildland firefighter?
- Why might someone choose wildland firefighting as a career path?
- What barriers or obstacles did Cassandra overcome to achieve their goals?
- What strengths or cultural assets did you hear and recognize in their sharing?

Provide students with the Q&A Video for synchronous or asynchronous viewing.

After viewing the Q&A Video, ask students to engage in a dialogue based upon the discussion questions as a class, group or partner.

Ask students to complete a Quick/Extended Write and/or Individual/Group Research project.

Quick/Extended Write

- Students can evaluate, analyze, or apply their understanding by completing a quick write based upon a topic from the above discussion items.

- Ask students to write a journalistic 250-350 word profile story that would introduce Fleckenstein and describe her career path to readers.
    - Here's a **useful link** you can use to help students craft their profiles.

Individual/Group Research

- Students can choose this career path or related field and complete research to determine necessary education, work experience, day in the life, core tasks, job availability, and salary range. Information can be shared back to the instructor or with other learners.
- What career terminology related to this video subject do individuals or groups need to further investigate to deepen their knowledge and understanding of this occupation?

EXTENDED LEARNING ACTIVITES

Provide students with Extended Learning Activities for deeper engagement through the following ways:

- Small group discussion
- Socratic Seminar
- Word Walls
- Gallery Walk
- Career path and/or career vision poster
- Resumes; what are they, how to build
- How to fill out a job application
- Mock Interviews

REFLECTION OF LEARNING

Students should be able to reflect upon, and:

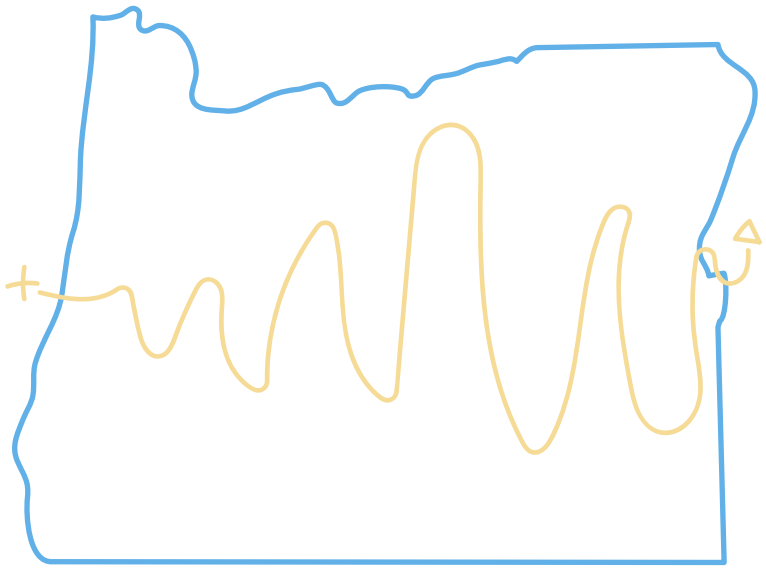
- Identify the skills needed to work as a wildland firefighter. This includes academic, technical and essential employability skills that students can learn about, explore, and develop in their middle school and high school environments.

- Identify and describe careers that are related to or share similarities to the career in this video.

- Categorize this career into the CTE Career Clusters and determine the academic courses, experiences, and opportunities that are available to them at their school and region.

- Envision themselves in this career area and consider if they would have the desire to pursue opportunities to further explore and prepare for this occupation.

Thank you for following us on this journey!



Share with us!

Join **Oregon Open Learning** and become a member of the **Oregon Career Awareness and Exploration Group**!

Share your unique lesson plans and units developed around the Career Journeys Video Series with educators, counselors, mentors and families around the state.

A collaboration between the Journalistic Learning Initiative, the Oregon Department of Education and the University of Oregon School of Journalism and Communication

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